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Embodying inequality: the struggle for reproductive justice

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Using Chile as a case study from the research conducted over 11-month period, this presentation will situate structural, cultural, and direct violence as a framework to make visible the multiple constructions of inequality in which women's abortion experience is both regulated and embedded. Structural violence helps to situate the construction of laws and policies that regulate and control women's reproduction and construct them as criminals. Cultural violence facilitates an understanding of how systems of inequality are legitimized and sustained, reinforcing permissive harmful attitudes and practices. Direct violence illustrates how structural and cultural violence manifest as concrete expressions of violence against women. The study is anchored in the narratives of women in Chile who could shed light on structural, cultural, and direct forms of violence in the struggle for reproductive justice. The in-depth interviews with women who have a history of terminating a pregnancy revealed how illegality is inscribed upon a woman's body, linking broader constructs of violence to lived experience. Women's narratives uncovered how their voice and experience with abortion are rendered invisible within clandestine spaces of illegality and only made visible as a result of health or legal consequences. Marginality is not only a place of social exclusion, but also a place of resistance. Despite barriers negotiating and embodying inequality within a highly criminalized environment, women revealed resistance to dominant structures, laws, and cultural discourse, illustrating individual and collective forms of agency.

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